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Spies were on campus, student charges

CIA being sued for files on FDU

By Lucy Komisar

Staff Writer

NEWARK — The New Jersey Civil Liberties Union (NJCLU) said it would go into federal court here today to obtain files of possible Central Intelligence Agency activities at Fairleigh Dickinson University. It says it suspects that since the early 1960s the CIA may have spied on FDU students by tapping their phones or through campus informants.

The suit is being brought on behalf of Marc Medoff, an editor of the school's Teaneck campus newspaper, "The Gauntlet." Medoff first wrote to the CIA in February 1977 for files relating to FDU. He is seeking to learn if there were agreements with university staff members or students to spy on or recruit foreign nationals at FDU, collect or disseminate information, or perform other services for the intelligence agency.

"I believe it is the first suit in the country to compel disclosure on domestic surveillance on a college campus," said NJCLU Executive Director Stephen Nagler.

Medoff received no information from the CIA. The agency told him: "Our searches surfaced some material which originated with the National Security Agency, and it has been referred to them for their review and direct response to you." The NSA refused to give Medoff information.

The suspicions of Medoff and the NJCLU are based on the fact that NSA is involved. Congressional investigations have revealed that in the 1960s and 1970s, the NSA conducted surveillance of individuals and passed the information it gained on to other agencies.

The CIA would not supply any other information from its own files or even say whether additional records existed. It said such action would compromise intelligence sources and methods and be an invasion of the privacy of any individuals involved.

A special committee of the Fairleigh Dickinson University Senate, formed at the request of President Jerome Pollack, was scheduled to meet this afternoon on the Rutherford campus to study the possibility of instituting guidelines for government intelligence activities at FDU.

Medoff, a 22-year-old senior from Hartsdale, N.Y., and a member of the Senate committee, said, "We will study the policies other schools have put into effect. The Harvard guidelines now being studied as a model by many schools say any research done for the CIA or an outside agency has to be public." The committee includes administrative, faculty, and student representatives.

The CIA has suggested that its contacts with universities have been aimed at obtaining scientific or social science research to give policymakers information and analysis of foreign developments.

Andrew Falkiewicz, then assistant to the director of the CIA, wrote to Medoff in February 1977:

"Occasionally such relationships are confidential at our request, but more often they are discreet at the scholar's request because of his concern that he will be badgered by those who feel he should not be free to make this particular choice."

Medoff quoted what he said was a 1975 CIA internal memo: "... in every instance where there was a contractual relationship, an appropriate senior official of the academic institution concerned was aware of the relationship."

A 1975 CIA internal memo said, "... in every instance where there was a contractual relationship, an appropriate senior official of the academic institution concerned was aware of the relationship."

Pollack said yesterday, "I have not been aware of any CIA activity. If there had been anything going on in FDU, I'd be very interested in knowing about it."

Critics have suggested that the CIA has been seeking research help at universities.

Medoff said that as a result of inquiries made on campus, he was told that the CIA in the 1960s had asked Dr. Nasrollah Fatemi, then chairman of the Social Science Department and now director of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, to give information and files on foreign students at FDU.

Interested in Iranians

Medoff said Fatemi told him the CIA "was particularly interested in students from Iran." FDU has about a hundred Iranians on campus, more than any other college in the state. Medoff said Fatemi told him that he had refused to cooperate.

According to Medoff, the CIA also contacted Dr. James Fatemi, a professor of political science and Nasrollah Fatemi's son, with the request he gather information for them on a trip he was to make to the Middle East. He, too, declined, Medoff said.

In 1975, William E. Colby, who was then CIA Director, told the House Select Committee on Intelligence that the National Security Agency listened in on telephone calls of selected individuals to or from other countries. Names were supplied by the CIA and other intelligence agencies. It was also reported that the NSA had equipment that monitored overseas cables and written domestic communications.

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According to congressional between 1969 and 1972, the NSA monitored over a thousand overseas phone calls and cable messages involving anti-war activists and other critics of the government. The information was turned over to several agencies, including the CIA, which used the information for its Operation CHAOS, a program aimed at domestic dissidents.

Says Nagler, "Although both the President and leading officials in the intelligence community have suggested that curbs on domestic surveillance are appropriate, the checks which could stop such practices have never been instituted.

"If they want to engage in domestic surveillance, and they can convince the President or hide it from him, they can still do so with impunity. The suit is to point up the need to use the judiciary as a check and for broader use of the Freedom of Information Act with limitation of its exemptions.

The case is being handled by volunteer attorney Howard Rosen of Newark.